

**Rogue River National Forest
Siskiyou National Forest**



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NEWS RELEASE

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Decision Announced for Protection of Ashland Watershed

Ashland, OR - Today, Ashland District Ranger Linda Duffy published a Record of Decision for reducing hazardous fuels on approximately 1,549 acres of the Ashland Watershed.

The Ashland Watershed was designated as "old-growth forest" in 1994 by the Northwest Forest Plan, and provides the city of Ashland with its only supply of domestic water. Nearly 100 years of fuel accumulation resulting from well-intentioned wildfire suppression actions has created a potential situation for large-scale, high intensity fire that could threaten old-growth values and interrupt the supply of clean water to the city.

Planning began about five years ago on the project known today as the Ashland Watershed Protection Project. Scheduled for implementation in the second year of planning, the project was interrupted by intense public controversy over management actions proposed by the Forest Service, primarily logging of large trees from the old-growth forest.

"This project has incorporated remarkable public involvement for finding acceptable solutions from perspectives of both the agency and citizens for appropriate hazard reduction that disrupt healthy functions of the natural world as little as possible", commented Duffy. "My decision to implement modified Alternative 6 as described in the Record of Decision addresses the immediate need to begin an effective program of fuel reduction in this watershed in ways that can be generally supported by the majority of concerned citizens".

Alternative 6 of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) was crafted to address citizen concerns as closely as possible. Modifications to Alternative 6 were made following analysis and public review comments to the FEIS.

Summary of the Record of Decision:

- + Defer mechanical treatments (logging) planned in the Winburn Ridge Area
- + Impose a 17-inch diameter limit for mechanical treatments (logging) in the Ashland interface area (requirements for worker safety is an exception)
- + Defer mechanical treatments in units 16 and 23 of the interface area
- + Defer the proposed 0.25 mile of road reconstruction and the construction of an additional helicopter tree landing site located in the vicinity of unit 19
- + Begin manual treatments (hand tool work) in the Winburn Ridge area as soon as practicable
- + Defer 1.65 acre of proposed mechanical treatment (logging) within the nonfish-bearing Riparian Reserve portion of unit 10
- + Commit to continued public involvement for implementation, education and monitoring
- + Begin public involvement and planning for hazardous fuels reduction strategy and actions for the entire 15,000 Ashland Watershed.

The Record of Decision authorizes actions to be implemented over an 8-12 year period of time on an estimated 1,549 acres using a combination of treatment methods:

- + 147 acres of mechanical treatment (logging) will be implemented in the interface area only removing selected trees less than 17-inches in diameter (113 acres removed with helicopter yarding, 16 acres skyline yarding, 17 acres horse yarding).
- + 1,129 acres of manual treatments (hand tool work).
- + 273 acres of prescribed underburning.
- + 1,152 acres of follow-up maintenance underburning.

These are final decisions; no formal comment period is provided, but the Record of Decision is subject to appeal within 45 days by any person or group that provided comment or expressed interest in the project during the analysis process.

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